

Dear Commissioners

I hereby submit my comments concerning the recent flooding in South East Queensland. As I am the local state MP for much of the area to the north and west of Ipswich, my electorate possibly suffered more flood related physical and structural damage than any other state electorate.

In view of this the main concerns I wish to draw to the attention of the Commission of Inquiry are as follows:

- The adequacy of early warning systems and processes. The experience by some of my constituents is that there was little or no early warning regarding the height and speed of the approaching flood waters, particularly in the Fernvale and Lowood areas. This also relates to many other areas across my electorate however the areas situated close to the bottom of the Wivenhoe dam wall were particularly at risk. In view of this it is important that responsibility for warnings needs to be clearly set out and identified.
- I believe that it is imperative that an investigation is conducted into the best way to alert residents about the impending risks associated with flooding by a range of early warning devices and systems. This could include electronic and manual systems and encompass SMS, phone, radio, computer generated notice as well as the possibility of manual sirens and alarms in areas of particular risk.
- The adequacy of evacuation centres needs to be reviewed. This should include issues like location, access matters, toileting, showering, meal preparation, sleeping areas, security, etc. I would consider that many residents across my electorate who had the misfortune of requiring assistance were critical of the facilities used for this purpose. I am confident that there are enough suitably located buildings available for the purpose of evacuation centres. However I also believe that we must now look at these centres and identify how they can be improved for future use. This might include the addition of extra toilets or showers, the integration of backup power supply (generators) systems, additional kitchen appliances etc..
- The adequacy of procedures and the management of the local disaster management groups needs to be reviewed. From personal experience of attending both the Ipswich and Somerset LDMG's I can advise that their structure and attendance needs to be improved. Specifically I would consider that it needs to be clearly documented that appropriately senior officers from specific agencies need to be in attendance and able to brief the group. My view was that at many meetings, there was a lack of participation and knowledge shown by some agencies. It is agreed that many agencies were busy identifying and responding to emergency situations but unless senior representatives of the agencies attended the LDMG's they were also missing out on knowing the bigger picture across the region.
- The adequacy and robustness of communications technologies in flood affected areas needs revision. Specifically the issue of mobile phone and land lines being made unusable due to flooding were of great concern to my communities. Opinion is divided across my communities about how this is best done, but I believe that any ability to improve the strength, reliability and robustness of these assets needs to be considered.
- The adequacy of appropriate disaster management advice on the ground was widely criticised by many residents. I have been advised by many residents that they felt abandoned and forgotten directly after the floods because there was no one available to tell them how to respond. I am aware that it is near impossible to reach all residents in a situation where the scale is as large as these floods. However the matter needs to be discussed and strategies should be devised whereby critical issues and information can be disseminated to those who need to know.
- The adequacy of appropriate police, SES, fire and ambulance services to respond to all of the emergency calls during the flood was of concern. I consider that all of our emergency service personnel went above and beyond their normal roles and duties to ensure the safety and well being of all Queenslanders. Without their support and professionalism I believe that many more lives could have been lost. My concern here specifically relates to their ability to communicate effectively and in a timely manner due to the previously advised technology problems. I am advised that some radio systems became ineffective. If this is the case I consider that this needs to be analysed to ensure that the very best technology is available and being used.
- The adequacy of alternative routes and access points to population centres cut off by flooding caused great concern to some of my communities. When this occurred in conjunction with the loss of communications the results could have been significantly worse. Communities which can

become cut off for lengthy periods without appropriate support and advice need to be identified and possible solutions highlighted.

- The adequacy of systems and processes for accessing financial help in an accurate and timely manner has caused major problems for many of my residents. I believe that the ability to get cash to those in distress and need was in the majority of cases handled quite well. However the longer term ability to financially assist flood affected residents was sometimes not very well explained. Due to the large number of different types of support and grants available I believe that many residents felt totally confused about what was available, and whether or not they were eligible.
- The adequacy of dam operations, including release strategies, has been an issue of widespread concern across my electorate. I believe that the majority of residents agree with the fact that the operators of both the Somerset and Wivenhoe dams carried out their roles to the best of their abilities. However it is important that a full and transparent review of their roles is conducted and that a report detailing any learnings is released to the public at the earliest opportunity.
- The role of insurance is a matter for some debate. The residents in my area basically fall into three categories. Those who were insured and whose insurance companies have accepted their claims. Those residents who were insured and their insurance companies have rejected their claims, and those residents who were not insured. Unfortunately the common theme from the first two groups is that the majority of residents would not have known if their claims were going to be accepted or rejected, because most felt that the insurance certificates and information were difficult to read and understand. This matter needs to be raised and lead to a situation where insurance documents are made to be user friendly and printed in simple language.
- It goes without saying that the vast majority of homes affected by the flood event right across my electorate were either adjacent to, or located on the Lockyer, Brisbane and Bremer rivers or flood plains. I am deeply concerned about the adequacy of drainage in some of my areas. What I have seen is more and more housing projects and developments occur in locations which are in low lying areas, and therefore more obviously subjected to flooding. I would like to see improvements made to the local and state planning regime so that residents are made fully aware of the susceptibility of their block to flooding. This needs to be in plain language so that it is obvious that owners are fully aware of the risks they accept in building in certain areas.